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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 ARAE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OFA-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 FRB-03

COME-00 SY-05 SCCT-01 AID-05 OPR-02 /103 W
---------- 117522
P R 092351Z JUN 75
FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4103
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELIZE 335

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV BH
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION VIEWS ON BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE

1. SUMMARY. DURING PAST FEW WEEKS OPPOSITION PARTY (UDP) HAS STAGED AN INTENSIFYING AND INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND CRITICISM IN OPPOSITION PRESS AIMED PRIMARILY AT PREVENTING PRICE GOVERNMENT FROM AGREEING TO ANY SOLUTION TO UK-GUATEMALA DISPUTE WHICH MIGHT EMANATE FROM CURRENT SERIES OF TALKS. END OF SUMMARY.

2. VIEWS OF CIVIC COMMITTEE. ON EVENINGS OF MAY 16 AND JUNE 4, BELIZE CIVIC COMMITTEE, AN ORGANIZATION OF INFLUENTIAL BELIZEANS WHICH CLAIMS TO BE POLITICALLY UNAFFILIATED (BUT WHICH IS ACTUALLY DOMINATED BY THE UDP) SPONSORED OUTDOOR PUBLIC MEETINGS IN WHICH SPEAKERS DENOUNCED PRICE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS REFUSAL TO ALLOW OPPOSITION TO BE REPRESENTED IN THESE TALKS AND FOR ITS FAILURE TO KEEP BELIZEAN PEOPLE INFORMED IN REGARD TO CONCESSIONS WHICH HMG, WITH ACQUIESCENCE OF GOB, ARE SAID TO BE PREPARING TO MAKE TO GOB IN EXCHANGE FOR INDEPENDENCE. UNTRUST-
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WORTHINESS OF PRICE AND HIS COHORTS AND THEIR ALLEGED WILLING-

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NESS TO SACRIFICE VITAL INTERESTS OF BELIZE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE ILLUSION OF INDEPENDENCE WERE PRINCIPAL UNDERLYING THEMES, FREQUENTLY RECAPITULATED.

3. OTHER CHARGES. ALSO AT THESE MEETINGS, A NUMBER OF CHARGES OF OFFICIAL CORRUPTION AND MISMANAGEMENT WERE AIRED, MOST DAMAGING OF WHICH WAS RECENTLY ISSUED AUDITOR'S REPORT ON PREVIOUS PUP BELIZE CITY ADMINISTRATION WHICH HAD FOUND THAT DOLS 144,000 OF LAST YEAR'S MUNICIPAL BUDGET COULD NOT BE ACCOUNTED FOR. REFUSAL OF GOG TO RELEASE BELIZEAN TUGBOAT CAPTAIN HERBERT EILERS ARRESTED BY GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES AFTER BARGE BEING TOWED BY EILER'S TUG SANK, SPILLING 15,000 GALLONS OF OIL IN THE GULF OF AMATIQUE WAS ALSO A SUBJECT OF IMPASSIONED RHETORIC. MAY 16 MEETING ATTRACTED TWO OR THREE HUNDRED INTERESTED ONLOOKERS BUT ATTENDANCE AT JUNE 4 EVENT WAS RELIABLY ESTIMATED AT ABOUT A THOUSAND AROUSED CITIZENS.

4. OFFICIAL UDP VIEW OF CURRENT TALKS. ON JUNE 5, UDP HELD SIMILAR EVENING MEETING THIS ONE FRANKLY PARTISAN (ATTENDANCE ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN 2,000 AND 3,000) IN WHICH PREMIER'S LOYALTY AND INTEGRITY WERE FURTHER IMPUGNED IN SPEECHES REITERATING COMMON SLOGAN "BELIZE INDEPENDENCE TODAY, GUATEMALA TAKES OVER TOMORROW." STATEMENTS EMANATING FROM RECENT MEETING OF MEXICAN PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT LAGUERUD, WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN CONSIDERABLE COVERAGE BY GOV INFORMATION MEDIA HERE (ALBEIT INTERPRETED AS REITERATION OF EXISTING GOM POLICY), WERE PORTRAYED BY UDP AS A MEXICAN GREEN LIGHT TO GUATEMALA. THIS WAS SEEN AS A NEW ELEMENT OF DANGER IN PRESENT SITUATION, MEXICO HAVING PREVIOUSLY BEEN REGARDED AS A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON GUATEMALA. REFERENCES WERE ALSO MADE TO RECENT SHARP INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT'S ACQUISITON OF PRIVATE LANDS. CONSIDERABLE ALARM WAS VOICED OVER DISTRICT ATTORNEY ASSAD SHOMAN'S MAY 27 SPEECH AT ST. JOHN'S ACADEMY GRADUATION IN WHICH SHOMAN HAD INVEIGHED AGAINST THE RECORD OF INEQUITIES PERPETRATED BY FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM IN BELIZE AND THE NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO EFFECT REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A BROADER SHARING OF THE FRUITS OF THE COUNTRY'S PRESENT AND POTENTIAL PRODUCTIVITY.

5. TONE OF ANTI- GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN. RHETORICAL EXCESSES OF
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CURRENT CAMPAIGN HAVE BEEN NOTEWORTHY EVEN BY BELIZEAN STANDARDS. ONE SPEAKER CHIDED THE AUDIENCE FOR ALLOWING CONTINUED GOG INCARCERATION OF CAPTAIN EILERS, NOTING THAT IN MANY COUNTRIES GUATEMALAN CONSUL GENERAL WOULD HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED LONG BEFORE

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PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OFA-01 EB-07 TRSE-00 FRB-03

COME-00 SY-05 SCCT-01 AID-05 OPR-02 /103 W
---------- 117827
P R 092351Z JUN 75
FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4104
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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AMEMBASSY MEXICO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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NOW THEREBY EFFECTING EILERS' RELEASE. ANOTHER REPORTED AN IN-
CREASE IN GUATEMALAN TROOPS ALONG BORDER. ANALOGIES COMPARING
PRICE GOVERMENT TO CASTRO REGIME IN CUBA FIGURED PROMINENTLY
IN SPEECHES AS DID THE APPELLATION OF COMMUNIST APPLIED TO PRICE
AND SEVERAL OF HIS MINISTERS. UDP SENATOR KEN TILLETT TOLD
CROWD THAT PUP, FACED WITH PRESENT UPSURGE OF OPPOSITION TO PRICE
GOVERNMENT, HAD BEGUN ARMING ITS MEMBERS AND HE EXHORTED HIS
LISTENERS TO BEGIN PREPARING EVENTUAL SHOWDOWN WITH GOVERNMENT BY
ACQUIRING ARMS OF THEIR OWN.

6. COMMENT: SENATOR TILLETT CAME IN FOR A VISA LAST FRIDAY AND I
TOOK THE OCCASION TO INQUIRE WHAT USE UDP WAS PLANNING TO MAKE OF
THE PUBLIC PASSIONS IT WAS SO BUSILY TRYING TO AROUSE. HE SAID
CURRENT UDP LEADERS' ASSESSMENT IS THAT ON BASIS OF WHAT THEY
HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIND OUT ABOUT TALKS AND IN VIEW OF ANTICIPATED
EXPRESSION OF UN SUPPORT SOMETIME DURING SUMMER, PRICE NOW BELIEVES
HE WILL BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE INDEPENDENCE AT BELIZE NATIONAL DAY
FESTIVITIES SEPTEMBER 10. AIM OF CURRENT UDP CAMPAIGN, HE SAID,
WAS TO SEE THAT THIS DID NOT HAPPEN. I EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT
THE UDP WOULD SEE ARMING ITS MEMBERS AS A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION TO
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THIS GOAL, BUT TILLETT STOUTLY REAFFIRMED HIS BELIEF THAT PUP WAS ACQUIRING ARMS, LEAVING UDP NO CHOICE BUT TO DO LIKEWISE. I GATHERED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WAS HIS OWN IDEA, NOT THE OFFICIAL LINE OF THE UDP.

7. UDP'S DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES. TILLETT ALSO CONFIRMED THAT AS OPPOSITION LEADER LINDO ANNOUNCED AT FINAL RALLY, LINDO WAS LEAVING FOR LONDON JUNE 7 TO DISCUSS BELIZE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE WITH UK CONSERVATIVE LEADER MARGARET THATCHER WITH LATTER'S APPROVAL AND THAT HE (TILLETT) PLANNED TO ACCOMPANY HIM. LINDO HAD ALSO SAID HE WOULD BE SEEING FOREIGN SECRETARY AND OTHER BRITISH OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH BELIZE. UDP PARTY WHIP PHILIP GOLDSON, REPLYING TO AN ARTICLE IN PUP NEWSPAPER BELIZE TIMES DESCRIBING A MYSTERIOUS TRIP HE HAD MADE TO GUATEMALA ALLEGEDLY SPONSORED BY GOG, SAID HE HAD INDEED BEEN IN GUATEMALA BUT PRIMARILY ON BEHALF OF HIS CLIENT CAPTAIN EILERS, BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE DISCUSSED THE BELIZE DISPUTE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER WHILE HE WAS THERE.

8. COMMENT: A DISCERNIBLE DEGREE OF PUBLIC APPREHENSION HAS BEEN RAISED BY THE EVENTS DISCUSSED ABOVE. AT THE STREET CORNER LEVEL, I AM TOLD, THERE IS AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF SCARE TALK ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A GUATEMALAN TAKEOVER. AS FOR THE UDP LEADERS WHOSE EFFORTS HAVE PRODUCED THIS APPREHENSION, I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THEY ARE MOTIVATED NOT SO MUCH BY FEAR OF GUATEMALA (SINCE THEY KNOW INDEPENDENCE WOULD HAVE TO BE PRECEDED BY AN AGREEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO GUATEMALA) BUT BY A RECOGNITION OF THE FACT THAT INDIVIDUALLY THEY WOULD NOT PROSPER IN AN INDEPENDENT BELIZE HEADED BY GEORGE PRICE, VINDICTIVENESS BEING ONE OF THE LATTER'S LESS ADMIRABLE QUALITIES. ALSO, AMONG POLITICALLY UNAFFILIATED BUSINESSMEN AND OTHER INFLUENTIAL BELIZEANS, THERE ARE MANY WHO HAVE A VISCERAL CONVICTION THAT THE COUNTRY IS BETTER OFF NOW THAN IT WOULD BE WITH INDEPENDENCE.

9. FINAL COMMENT. THIS IS THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION PRICE HAS TO RECKON WITH IN EVALUATING THE ACCEPTABILITY OF ANY PROPOSALS WHICH MAY EMERGE FROM THE CURRENT UK-GUATEMALA TALKS. EVEN BEFORE THE TALKS BECAME A HOT ISSUE IN BELIZE, THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT THE PREMIER WAS IN TROUBLE WITH ELEMENTS IN HIS OWN PARTY WHO WERE SAID TO BE TURNED OFF BY THE EGALITARIAN, STATIST VIEWS OF SHOMAN AND EVEN MORE SO BY EVIDENCE THAT THESE CONFIDENTIAL

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VIEWS WERE BEING INCREASINGLY ADOPTED BY THE PREMIER. A RELATIVELY SMALL DEFECTION (FOUR) IN THE ASSEMBLY WOULD FINISH PRICE. IN MY OPINION, CHANCES OF THIS HAPPENING IN PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF APPREHENSION OVER GUATEMALA HAVE PROBABLY INCREASED. ALL IN ALL, DIFFICULTIES EXPECTED IN CONCOCTING AN INDEPENDENCE

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FORMULA ACCEPTABLE TO UK, GUATEMALA, MEXICO AND BELIZE SEEM
SCARCELY LESS FORMIDABLE THAN PROBLEMS SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD
POSE FOR PRICE IN HIS OWN BACK YARD. GAWF

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, OPPOSITION PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BELIZE00335
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750202-0146
From: BELIZE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750666/aaaacicp.tel
Line Count: 226
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION VIEWS ON BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, BH, UDP
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006